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ABSTRACT

Several reform reports on American education that focus on improving the quality of instructional materials are reviewed. This project had three aims: (1) to survey the scope of the reports emanating from the reform movement and to describe the process of their selection for review; (2) to present reviews of reports by the Paideia Group, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, E. L. Boyer's "High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America," the Education Commission of the States Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, the National Science Foundation, W. J. Bennett's "To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education," a National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Commission on Educational Issues of the National Association of Independent Schools joint project to study high schools (three reports by Sizer, 1984, by Powell et al., 1985, and by Hampel, 1986), the United States Department of Education's "The Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education," the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force on Teaching as a Profession report, W. J. Bennett's "First Lessons: A Report on Elementary Education in America," and W. J. Bennett's "American Education: Making it Work"; and (3) to summarize the findings of the reviews. A bibliography is included. (Author/AA)

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THE IMPERATIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Critiques of the Reform Reports on American Education, 1983 to 1988

MICHAEL G. WATT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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ABSTRACT

This document reports reviews of a selection of the reform reports on American education about improving the quality of instructional materials. The project had three aims: (1) to survey the scope of the reports emanating from the reform movement and to describe the process of their selection for review; (2) to present reviews of reports by the Paideia Group, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, E. L. Boyer, the Education Commission of the States Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, the National Science Foundation, W. J. Bennett's *To Reclaim a Legacy : A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education,* A Study of High Schools, the United States Department of Education's *The Nature Responds : Recent Efforts to Improve Education*, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, W. J. Bennett's *First Lessons : A Report on Elementary Education in America,* and W. J. Bennett's *American Education : Making it Work,* and (3) to summarise the findings of the reviews. A bibliography is included. (Author)

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PREFACE

The author wishes to express gratitude to the following persons and institutions for providing copies of the reform reports on American education: the staff of the Library, Deakin University, Waurn Ponds, Victoria, Australia, for *Action for Excellence : A Comprehensive Plan to Improve our Nation's Schools;* the Librarian, Australian Council for Educational Research, Hawthorn, Victoria, for *Educating Americans for the 21st Century : A Plan of Action for Improving Mathematics, Science and Technology Education for all American Elementary and Secondary Students so that their Achievement is the Best in the World by 1995. A Report to the American People and the National Science Board;* the staff of the library of the Education Department of South Australia at the Wattle Park Teachers Centre, Wattle Park, South Australia, for *Academic Preparation for College : What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do* and *The Nation Responds : Recent Efforts to Improve Education;* the staff of the library at the Toorak Campus of Victoria College, Malvern, Victoria, for *To Reclaim a Legacy : A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education;* the staff of the library, Canberra College of Advanced Education, Belconnen, A.C.T. for *The Making of a Teacher : A Report on Teacher Education and Certification;* and the staff of the Carlton Campus, Melbourne College of Advanced Education, Carlton, Victoria, for *A Nation Prepared : Teachers for the 21st Century*. David P. Gardner, Chairman, National Commission on Excellence in Education, is to be thanked for providing information to contact the Commission's Executive Director, Milton Goldberg. Milton Goldberg and Margaret Chavez, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, United States Department of Education, Washington, D.C., are to be thanked for *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform, First Lessons : A Report on Elementary Education in America,* and *American Education : Making it Work*. Dr. Goldberg is to be thanked for providing other materials on the research background to *A Nation at Risk*. The library, University of Tasmania was the source for the remaining reports: *The Paideia Proposal : An Educational Manifesto; Paideia Problems and Possibilities; The Paideia Program : An Educational Syllabus; High School : A Report on Secondary Education in America; Horace's Compromise : The Dilemma of the American High School; The Shopping Mall High School; American High Schools Since 1940; The Good High School : Portraits of Character and Culture;* and *Necessary Lessons : Decline and Renewal of American Schools*.

The Permissions Department, Harper and Row Publishers Inc., New York, N.Y., granted permission to print the two quotations from E. L. Boyer, *High School : A Report on Secondary Education in America*, New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1983, 312, presented in Section 2.3 of this report. The quotations from *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform* and *American Education : Making it Work*, reprinted in Section 2.2 and Section 2.11, respectively, are in the public domain. The Permissions Department, Garland Publishing Inc., New York, N.Y., granted permission to print the quotation from A. Woodward, D. L. Elliott, and K. C. Nagel, *Textbooks in School and Society : An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Research*, Garland Publishing, 1988, 1-3. The extract from *EPIEgram Materials*, presented in Section 2.2, is published with the permission of the Educational Products Information Exchange Institute, Water Mill, N.Y.

Patricia Walker is to be thanked for typing the report. Maxwell Harris and Louise Green are to be thanked for reproducing the document.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to review a selection of the reports published on the excellence debate in American education between *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform*, published in 1983, and *American Education : Making it Work*, presented in 1988. These reports are examined with regard to statements that their authors have presented on the uses of instructional materials in American education. The intent is that the critiques will provide Australian educators with more perceptive understandings of current issues on the uses of instructional materials in a similar educational environment.

In 1983, American education was targeted for reform. The need for reform was recognised by policy-makers in education because it had become evident that American schools had failed to solve a range of social, economic and political issues during the 1970s. The publication by Peters and Waterman (1982) was followed by an indictment of American education presented by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in its report, *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform*, presented in April, 1983. These publications led to a public debate on excellence in education.

Preceded by one other notable report, *A Nation at Risk* was suceeded by a spate of other reports: amongst them, Adler (1982); Adler (1983); Boyer (1983); the Education Commission of the States, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth (1983); Goodlad (1983); Lightfoot (1983); the National Science Foundation (1983); Sewall (1983); Adler (1984); Bennett (1984); The College Board Educational Equality Project (1984); Feistritzer (1984); Sizer (1984); the United States Department of Education (1984); Powell et al. (1985); Hampel (1986); the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986); Bennett (1986); and Bennett (1988). These reports constitute those surveyed for this review.

The reports fall into two categories: those, like *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform* and *American Education : Making it Work*, which are intended to produce a windfall of publicity; and those, such as the trilogy of reports arising from the project, A Study of High Schools, which are aimed at educators and academics by way of their complexity and detail. Because of the public interest of the first category, the contents of these reports have been analysed in greater depth.

In spite of their general calls for reform in American schools and higher education, the authors of these reports vary on which practices should be recommended to facilitate excellence in education, particularly in high schools. In several of these reports, the authors call for reforms of existing practices in textbook adoption, extending participation in the selection process, improving the quality of evaluations, and other matters related to the uses of instructional materials.

The author now examines, in detail, the implications of each of these reports on educational reform for improving the quality of instructional materials. In cases where this issue is not discussed within a report, a description of that report has been omitted from the reviews presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE REVIEWS OF THE REPORTS

2.1 The Paideia Group

The Paideia program has been presented by Adler (1982; 1983; 1984) in a trilogy : *The Paideia Proposal : An Educational Manifesto; Paideia Problems and Possibilities;* and *The Paideia Program : An Educational Syllabus*. Within this trilogy, the Paideia Group proposed a framework for a course of study, described under three columns, each with defined goals, means and areas, and operations and activities.

The implications of this proposed course of study for the selection and the evaluation of instructional materials is clear. The Paideia Group went so far as to select and to recommend basic and supplementary materials. The recommendations are grouped into three sets: Set I is appropriate for kindergarten through to grade 4; Set II is appropriate for grade 5 through to grade 9; and Set III is appropriate for grade 10 through to grade 12. Each set is divided into categories: an alphabetical listing of all titles by author; poetry; fables or traditional tales; fiction; plays; books dealing with real people, places, and things; essays, speeches and documents; and collections.

Although the recommended materials have been screened through a selective process, there is no explicit reference to this process. The reader is told, however, that teachers are expected to select both materials and extracts from the recommended materials. As these recommended materials are graded into three sets, it is implied that teachers' selections must be made from sets that are appropriate to their grades.

In discussing implementation of the Paideia program, Adler (1984 : 70) mentions the difficulty of selecting textbooks and other aids to be used in didactic teaching. It is stated that the Paideia Group was silent on this prerequisite for implementation of the program because it would have involved publishing another volume. In only one instance (Adler, 1983 : 28) is the need for selection of library texts mentioned in relation to their presentation in seminars.

2.2 The National Commission on Excellence in Education

The National Commission on Excellence in Education was created on 26 August, 1981, to examine the quality of American education. The aims of the Commission were to assess the quality of teaching and learning in American schools, to compare the performance of American schools with those of other industrialised nations, to examine the relationship between student achievement at high school level and college admission requirements, to identify educational programs resulting in student success at the college level, to assess the degree to which social and educational changes have affected student achievement, and to define problems to be overcome to restore excellence to education.

The work of the National Commission on Excellence in Education resulted in the presentation of the report, *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform*, on 26 April, 1983. The report consists of a Letter of Transmittal, the Members of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, an Introduction, A Nation at Risk, and seven appendices. A Nation at Risk comprises sixteen sections: The Risk; Indicators of the Risk; Hope and Frustration; Excellence in Education; the Learning Society; The Tools at Hand; The Public's Commitment; Findings regarding content, expectations, time and teaching; Recommendation A - Content; Recommendation B - Standards and Expectations; Recommendation C - Time; Recommendation D - Teaching; Recommendation E - Leadership and Fiscal Support; Americans Can Do It; A Word to Parents and Students; and A Final Word. The appendices are titled Charter National

Commission on Excellence in Education, Schedule of the Commission's Public Events, Commissioned Papers, Hearing Testimony, Other Presentations to the Commission, and Notable Programs.

Issues related to the selection and the evaluation of instructional materials were considered in comprehensive terms by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The Commission reported that many American students found the subject matter of many instructional materials to be too easy because many publishers are 'writing down' textbooks to ever-lower reading levels. To support this view the Commission cited a study conducted by the Educational Products Information Exchange Institute (1980) for the National Institute of Education.

Findings Regarding Expectations:

> "A recent study by Education Products Information Exchange revealed that a majority of students were able to master 80 percent of the material in some of their subject-matter texts before they had even opened the books. Many books do not challenge the students to whom they are assigned."

(National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform*, 21)

Tomlinson (1986) has reported that evidence on the decline in the substantive quality of both textbooks and teachers, together with standardised achievement test scores, was gathered by the National Commission on Excellence in Education at public hearings held at Stanford University, Stanford, California, on 11 March, 1982, and at Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, on 12 May, 1982.

The Educational Products Information Exchange Institute (1983) has commented upon the implications of this citation by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in the following terms.

> "The research of the EPIE Institute was the only work to be formally cited in the body of the Report. And while we were gratified that the Commission considered our work important enough to highlight, we were disappointed that they misinterpreted our research to conform to the rather simplistic recommendation of making textbooks more difficult ...
>
> What EPIE's research indicated was that (1) we should know more about what students had been taught the previous year and what they 'knew' about a particular subject, (2) objective information regarding textbook content was needed, and (3) a greater range of textbooks should be drawn on to meet the needs of students. The Commission, however, chose to interpret EPIE's findings differently and boldly state - ' a majority of students were able to master 80 per cent of the material in some of their subject-matter texts before they had even opened the books. Many books do not challenge the students to whom they are assigned, page 21'. Clearly, as far as the Commission was concerned, making textbooks more difficult was more important than ensuring that a better 'fit' between texts and students occurred ...
>
> ... However, the recommendations concerning Learner Verification and Revision of textbooks (although not called such in the Report) and the need for widespread consumer information services were especially heartening.
>
> Clearly, there is a long way to go before instructional materials receive the attention that merit pay does in the debate over school improvement. Yet the Commission's Report is a welcome start to what, we hope, will be an increasing recognition that the textbook plays a central role in schooling - and that without addressing the role and nature of instructional materials, one cannot successfully address school improvement."

(Educational Products Information Exchange Institute, 1983, 'Excellence in Education', *EPIEgram Materials*, 12m:1, 4-5

To remedy this situation, the Commission recommended that three measures are implemented in publishing and education in America.

Recommendation B : Standards and Expectations

Implementing Recommendation 4:

> "Textbooks and other tools of learning and teaching should be upgraded and updated to assure more rigorous content. We call upon university scientists, scholars, and members of professional societies, in collaboration with master teachers, to help in this task, as they did in the post-Sputnik era. They should assist willing publishers in developing the products or publish their own alternatives where there are persistent inadequacies."

Implementing Recommendation 6:

> "Because no textbook in any subject can be geared to the needs of all students, funds should be made available to support text development in "thin-market" areas, such as those for disadvantaged students, the learning disabled, and the gifted and talented."

Implementing Recommendation 8:

> "New instructional materials should reflect the most current applications of technology in appropriate curriculum areas, the best scholarship in each discipline, and research in learning and teaching."

(National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform*, 28-29).

The Commission also drew attention to the lack of influence individual teachers have upon textbook selection. To improve the selective and the evaluative aspects of textbook adoption at either the state level or the school district level, the Commission recommended two measures.

Recommendation B : Standards and Expectations

Implementing Recommendation 5:

> "In considering textbooks for adoption, States and school districts should: (a) evaluate texts and other materials on their ability to present rigorous and challenging material clearly; and (b) require publishers to furnish evaluation data on the material's effectiveness."

Implementing Recommendation 7:

> "To assure quality, all publishers should furnish evidence of the quality and appropriateness of textbooks, based on results from field trials and credible evaluations. In view of the enormous numbers and varieties of texts available, more widespread consumer information services for purchasers are badly needed."

(National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform*, 28-29).

2.3 Boyer

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching in the spring of 1980, it was decided that the quality of American secondary education should be examined. Members of an advisory group, the National High School Panel, were selected and assisted the trustees over a two-year period. A sample of fifteen public high schools was selected for field studies and school visits. The reports gained from these field studies were synthesised, together with information from other sources, to form the basis for the report, *High School : A Report on Secondary Education in America.*

Boyer examined the inadequacies of present textbook adoption procedures in the United States. The author criticised the lack of say that most American teachers have in the selection of the textbooks they use. Furthermore, Boyer censored the reliance upon the use of textbooks in classrooms rather than primary sources. Within the agenda for action, Boyer recommended that:

> "States should ease their control over the selection of textbooks and transfer more authority to the district and local school. Teachers should have a far greater voice in selecting materials appropriate to their own subject areas."

> "Textbooks seldom communicate to students the richness and excitement of original works. The classroom use of primary source materials should be expanded."

(Boyer, E. L., 1983, *High School : A Report on Secondary Education in America.* New York : Harper and Row, 312).

2.4 The Education Commission of the States, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth

The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth comprised a wide range of leaders in American society: governors; legislators; corporate chief executives; state and local school board members; educators; leaders of labour; the scientific community; and others. The report, *Action for Excellence : A Comprehensive Plan to Improve Our Nation's Schools,* was published in June, 1983, after the Task Force had deliberated for several months. The report represented the midpoint in the work of the Task Force, which intended to promote efforts to put the action plan into effect and to support it with the establishment of a clearinghouse of information.

The Education Commission of the States, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth (1983: 4) recognised three issues in current American education: a belief that an emergency exists; a belief that immediate action is imperative; and a belief that such action can succeed. In this report, public education at both primary and secondary levels was examined in these terms.

The report consists of eight parts: a Foreword, A Conviction that a Real Emergency is Upon Us; the Members, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth; an Executive Summary, The Action Plan; the first chapter, The Challenge : Education for Economic Growth; the second chapter, The Problem : Educational Deficits and Blurred Goals; the third chapter, An Action Plan to Improve the Schools; the fourth chapter, The Outlook: Can We Succeed?; and an appendix, Basic Skills and Competencies for Productive Employment. The first chapter contains two sections: Broadening the Definition of "Basic Skills"; and Education and Growth. The second chapter contains six sections: Problems in Student Achievement; The Teacher Gap; Needed : Curriculum Renewal; Management and Leadership Problems; The Cost of These Deficiencies; and The Necessity for Clear Goals. The third chapter consists of a single section, The Action Plan, containing eight action recommendations. The appendix contains a list of skills on reading competencies, writing competencies, speaking and listening competencies, mathematical competencies,

scientific competencies, reasoning competencies, basic employment, economic competencies, and computer literacy competencies.

Unlike the National Commission on Excellence in Education, this Task Force did not view the selection and the evaluation of instructional materials as being of critical importance to action it recommended to improve education. The Task Force (Education Commission of the States, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 27-28) did believe, however, that instructional materials such as those developed from funds of the National Science Foundation have been targeted at the most able students and are now obsolete in terms of technological advancements.

In response to the problems identified, the Task Force developed an Action Plan on Education for Economic Growth which consisted of eight action recommendations. Action Recommendation 3 (Education Commission of the States, Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 36) aimed at marshalling resources that are essential for improving public schools. The Task Force believed that greater expenditure is needed to improve the quality of textbooks and that the technological advancements, such as videotapes, should be harnessed to augment the more traditional media of instructional materials.

2.5 The National Science Foundation

The National Science Foundation established a twenty-member National Science Board Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology to specify a plan of action to address problems facing elementary and secondary education in mathematics, science and technology. After its first meeting in July, 1982, the Commission members visited and analysed acknowledged examples of successful programs and received testimonies from individuals and groups. The final report was published on 13 September, 1983.

This report consists of two volumes: the first, A report to the American People and the National Science Board; and the second, the Source Materials. The first volume consists of an Executive Summary, an Introduction, the first chapter, The Basic Objective, the second chapter, Building a New National Commitment, the third chapter, Pointing the Direction for Widespread Dramatic Change, the fourth chapter, Solutions to the Teaching Dilemma, the fifth chapter, The Promise of the New Information Technologies, the sixth chapter, Informal Education, and the seventh chapter, How the Nation Should Finance Needed Educational Improvements in Elementary and Secondary School Mathematics, Science and Technology. The exhibits appended to the report are titled History of Programs Reviewed by the Commission, Suggestions for Course Topics and Criteria for Selection, Costs of Recommended Federal Initiatives, Imaginative Ways to Enhance Teacher Compensation, and Using Computers in the Schools : Technology Works.

The second volume is composed of source documents which report activities sponsored by the National Science Board Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology. This volume consists of eleven chapters of source materials: the first, The Mathematical Sciences Curriculum K-12 : What is Still Fundamental and What is Not, a report from the Conference Board of Mathematical Sciences; the second, A Revised and Intensified Science and Technology Curriculum, Grades K-12 Urgently Needed for Our Future, a report from a Conference on Goals for Science and Technology Education Grades K-12; the third, Integrating Concepts of Engineering and Science into Instruction in Grade Levels K-12, a report from an Ad Hoc Sub-committee of the N.S.F. Engineering Advisory Committee; the fourth, Fundamentals in Precollege Technology Education, a report from the Junior Engineering Technical Society; the fifth, Report on Educational Technology, a report from a Conference on the Uses of Technology in Education; the sixth, Research on Cognition and Behavior Relevant to Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology, a report from the Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences; the seventh, Results of a 50-State Survey of Initiatives in Science, Mathematics and Computer Education, a report from the Education Commission of the States; the

eighth, Magnet Schools, a paper commissioned by the Pfizer Corporation; the ninth, An assessment of Programs that Facilitate Increased Access and Achievement of Females and Minorities in K-12 Mathematics and Science Education, a report from the Office of Opportunities in Science, American Association for the Advancement of Science; the tenth, A Case Study of Lyons Township High School; and the eleventh, Business' Role in Precollegiate Education, a report from the Conference Board.

The National Science Board Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology considered that the National Science Foundation should establish a system to evaluate instructional materials, which is presented in the sub-section, Revamping the Curriculum, of the fifth chapter in the first volume of the report. This initiative arose from a proposal to develop and to evaluate a new curiculum for mathematics, science and technology courses for grades K to 12. As part of this process, the Commission found that the National Science Foundation should implement procedures to evaluate existing curricula, identify exemplary curricula, disseminate information, establish a clearinghouse and promote the development of guidelines for a new curriculum. The Commission proposed that the National Science Foundation might approach this task through a Mathematics, Science and Technology Curriculum Council consisting of four committees: Elementary Mathematics; Elementary Science; Secondary Mathematics; and Secondary Science and Technology. Among its responsibilities, each committee would review critically available texts and other resource materials, publish these recommendations and evaluations, and identify the areas where improved or new curriculum materials are needed (National Science Foundation, 1983, 1, 44-46). A budget for funding this program is also specified (National Science Foundation, 1983, 1, 111-112).

The uses of instructional materials within mathematics, science and technology programs are also considered in two of the source documents contained in the second volume. In the first source document, the Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences stated that changes need to be made to textbooks so that they will fit the new curriculum for mathematics and science at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Therefore, the Conference Board recommended that groups responsible for preparing and adopting textbooks should be competent in the subject matter of mathematics and science and have available evidence of learner verification (National Science Foundation, 1983, 2, 4). The ad hoc Sub-committee of the N.S.F. Engineering Advisory Committee stated that there is an insubstantial quantity of instructional materials available to address the objectives of a curriculum to integrate science and technology into precollege education. The Sub-committee recommended that learner verification and revision must be applied in preparing instructional materials, and that specific information regarding engineering and applications of science, including case studies, needs to be included in textbooks for use in courses on mathematics and social studies (National Science Foundation, 1983, 2, 65-66).

2.6 Bennett (1984)

In March, 1984, the United States Secretary of Education formed a 31-member Study Group on the State of Learning in the Humanities in Higher Education, consisting of prominent teachers, scholars, administrators and authorities on higher education from research universities, land grant colleges, co-educational liberal arts colleges, women's colleges, black colleges, two-year colleges and secondary schools. The study group held three public meetings during the spring and summer of 1984, which focused on the teaching and learning of the humanities at the baccalaureate level, although the effects of secondary education and postgraduate education upon undergraduate education were considered. As a consequence of these activities, William J. Bennett, the United States Secretary of Education, wrote the report *To Reclaim a Legacy : A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education*, in consultation with the members of the Study Group.

This report consists of a Foreword, an Introduction, the first chapter, Why study the humanities?; the second chapter, How should the humanities be taught and learned?; the third chapter, How well are the humanities being taught and learned on the nation's

campuses?; the fourth chapter, The challenge of academic leadership; and the fifth chapter, Concluding thoughts. The second chapter contains three sections: Good teaching; A good curriculum; and What should be read? The third chapter contains five sections: The state of teaching in the humanities; Effects of graduate education on teaching; The state of the humanities upon the curriculum; Effects of the curriculum on secondary education; and Bright spots in the curriculum.

The author of the report is concerned with the adoption of a body of significant literature for humanities courses in higher education that reflects a consensus on what works should be read rather than applying criteria to select texts on their relative merits. This argument is used to support curriculum reform in higher education by contradicting the prevailing tendencies towards both accounting for the pluralistic needs of American society and adopting intellectual relativism as the guiding principle of the curriculum.

2.7 A Study of High Schools

Three reports, those by Sizer (1984), by Powell et al. (1985), and by Hampel (1986) comprise A Study of High Schools, a project sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Commission on Educational Issues of the National Association of Independent Schools. Each report concentrates upon particular educational issues: Sizer concentrates upon learning and teaching; Powell et al. concentrate upon several issues identified at fifteen high schools sampled during the 1981-1982 academic year; and Hampel consists of essays on the history of American high schools since 1940.

Sizer examines teaching and learning through a biographical account of a teacher, Horace, a variety of students, the educational program and the structure of an American high school. Following publication of the report, a number of schools banded with the sponsoring organisations to form a Coalition of Essential Schools, which presented a set of principles: focus; simple goals; universal goals; personalisation; student-as-worker; diploma by exhibition; attitude; staff; and budget. Under the principle, personalisation, it is stated that the principal and the staff of a school should be responsible entirely for the selection of instructional materials.

In his account of American high schools since 1940, Hampel (1986: 26) cites only a single instance of practices related to this field of study. He presents a vivid account of the sort of dubious practice that has attracted notoriety to the activities of some textbook adoption committees.

2.8 The United States Department of Education

Following the dissemination of the report, *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform,* the United States Department of Education introduced a set of procedures to monitor reform initiatives in education. The report, *The Nation Responds : Recent Efforts to Improve Education,* represents part of this effort. Published in May, 1984, the report overviews the most significant state, local and other initiatives resulting from the reform debate.

The report consists of five parts: a Preface; a Foreword; The Nation Responds: An Overview; State Initiatives; and Sample Initiatives. The section, State Initiatives, lists both proposed and approved educational reforms in each state and the District of Columbia in the subsection, State Profiles, and is supplemented in tabular form by the subsection, Chart : Recent Initiatives Reported by States. The section, Sample Activities, lists an informal sampling of significant efforts in four subsections: Local Schools and School Districts; Post-secondary Institutions; Associations and Organizations; and Private Sector.

The Overview, which describes national developments in education during the twelve-month period following the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, summarises the

attributes of initiatives to reform the quality of instructional materials. Enacted or approved initiatives to improve instructional materials are reported in the section, State Initiatives, for eleven states: Alabama, Alaska; California; Delaware; Hawaii; Indiana; Michigan; New York; Ohio; Tennessee; and Virginia. Proposed initiatives to improve instructional materials are reported in the same section for ten states: Arizona; Florida; Illinois, Minnesota; New Mexico; North Carolina; Pennsylvania; Texas; Washington; and Wisconsin. The issues described in these initiatives encompass general proposals for reform of instructional materials, funding purchases of instructional materials, or adopting, reviewing and selecting instructional materials.

2.9 The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, Task Force on Teaching as a Profession

A program of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, was established in January, 1985. The Advisory Council of the Forum established a fourteen-member Task Force on Teaching as a Profession at its first meeting during March, 1985. The findings and the recommendations resulting from the work of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession were published in the report, *A Nation Prepared : Teachers for the 21st Century,* during the spring of 1986.

This report consists of eleven parts: an Executive Summary; a Preface; the first chapter, A Time of Ferment; the second chapter, The Challenge; the third chapter, Seizing the Opportunity; the fourth chapter, Schools for the 21st Century : A Scenario; the fifth chapter, The Plan; the sixth chapter, Implementing the Plan; Comments, containing two minority reports; Acknowledgements; and four appendices. The first chapter contains four sections: A Changing World Economy; Those Left Out; Requirements of Democracy; and Learning in a Knowledge-based Economy. The second chapter consists of three sections: The Crucial Function of the Teacher; The Second Wave of Reform; and The Teacher Shortage. The third chapter contains four sections: Raising Standards; Recruiting Highly Skilled Teachers; The Structure of the Teaching Work Force and The Schools; and The Grounds for Optimism. The fifth chapter contains seven sections: The New Framework; A Professional Environment for Teaching; New Standards for Excellence in Teaching; Restructuring Teacher Education; Minority Teachers; Incentives, Performance and Productivity; and Teacher Salaries and Benefits. The sixth chapter consists of two sections: Paying for Quality; and An Open Invitation to Join in the Work Ahead. The appendices are titled Carnegie Forum Advisory Council, Papers Commissioned for the Carnegie Forum's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, Workshop Participants, and Bibliographical Sketches.

Although the Task Force did not consider the selection and the evaluation of instructional materials to be within the parameters of its investigation, the applications of exemplary practices for selecting and evaluating instructional materials are discussed within the recommended plan. For instance, the Task Force believed that teachers should make, or at least strongly influence, decisions concerning the use of instructional materials (The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 58). Furthermore, the Task Force criticised the poor quality and the poor presentation of instructional materials used in the classroom (The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 75).

2.10 Bennett (1986)

The report, *First Lessons : A Report on Elementary Education in America,* resulted as part of a larger undertaking, The Year of the Elementary School, held during the 1985-86 school year. In October, 1985, the United States Secretary of Education formed an Elementary Education Study Group of twenty-one members to assist in the preparation of this report. The report was published in October, 1986. The purpose of the report is to inform both educators and a wider public audience of the central importance of elementary education.

The report consists of an Introduction, The Year of the Elementary School, the first chapter, Children, Parents and the Community of Adults, the second chapter, Our Elementary Schools : "They Teach us Wonderful Things", the third chapter, Elementary School Professionals, the fourth chapter, School Policy, the fifth chapter, In the Schools, and the Members of the Elementary Education Study Group. The first chapter contains three sections: Children; Parents; and The Community of Adults. The second chapter contains three sections: The Explicit Curriculum with parts on reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, foreign languages, health and physical education, computers, and libraries; The Implicit Curriculum; and Will It All Fit? The third chapter is divided into two sections: The Principal; and Teachers. The fourth part comprises eleven sections: Standards for All Children; Resources; Discipline; Drugs; Class Size; Parents and Preschool; Kindergarten; Special Education; The Gifted Child; Textbooks; and Language-minority Children.

Issues related to the uses of instructional materials in elementary schools were considered by the members of the Elementary Education Study Group. In the section, The Explicit Curriculum, within the part on reading, comment is made upon the discrepant quality of reading primers used in elementary schools. It is also determined that children may be discouraged from reading by the dubious literary quality of textbooks, because readability formulas, applied by many publishers to match appropriate vocabulary and syntax to grade levels, often reduce vocabulary and syntax to minimum levels (Bennett, 1986, 23-24).

The influence of textbooks on the curriculum was viewed by the members of the Elementary Education Study Group as significant (Bennett, 1986, 62). Because textbooks are market-responsive, it is argued that state and district policy-makers, together with teachers and parents, should set guidelines for publishers. The lack of participation, however, by elementary teachers in the decision-making process for selection of instructional materials is discussed (Bennett, 1986, 47).

2.11 Bennett (1988)

The purpose of the report, *American Education : Making it Work*, authored by Bennett (1988), the United States Secretary of Education, is to assess what has been accomplished to redress the failures in the quality of American schools during the five-year period since the release of *A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform* in 1983. Furthermore, the report is intended to guide American educators to apply their knowledge and experience to make American education work.

The report consists of an Introduction, two Parts (I, How Far Have We Come?; and II, What We Need to Do), a Conclusion, Notes, and Acknowledgements. Part I comprises three sections: What Our Students Know, which compares current and retrospective achievement test (NAEP) scores of American students in reading, writing, literature, mathematics, science, history, geography, and civics; What Our Students Study; and How Our Schools Perform on attendance, time for instruction, distractions, and graduation rates. Part II comprises five sections: Strengthen Content, which examines The Core Curriculum Debate, The Need to Improve, Defining the Curriculum and Improving its Content, Student Differences, Textbooks, and Testing; Ensure Equal Intellectual Opportunity, which examines Access to Quality, False Obstacles, and What's To Be Done; Establish an Ethos of Achievement, which examines Moral Lessons, Order and Discipline, and Hard Work; Recruit and Reward Good Teachers and Principals, which examines Getting Good Teachers by opening the profession, demonstrated competence, and pay for performance, Getting Good Principals by recruiting talent, better training, and more authority; and Institute Accountability, which examines spending wisely, Providing Choice, Monitoring Productivity, and Rewarding Success.

The need for improvement in current textbook adoption and selection practices at the state level is asserted (Bennett, 1988 : 28-29). Excessive state regulation is viewed as a

contributing cause of inappropriate practices by textbook adoption committees, to the extent that committees often require textbooks to conform to elaborate lists of objectives. Moreover, crude formulas are often applied to identify biases towards women, ethnic minorities, environmentalists, the elderly and the handicapped. On the other hand, publishers have too often responded by producing glossy, encyclopedic but lifeless textbooks.

In spite of the existing limitations in textbook adoption and selection practices, Bennett does recognise that certain improvements have occurred in the quality of textbooks.

> "The reform movement has demanded a higher threshold of quality for textbooks, and there are some encouraging signs of progress. A few publishers have lately shown that it is possible successfully to enter tough textbook markets with good materials. But we need to do better - much better. If they are to be held accountable for results of their work, teachers and principals all over the country must be given a stronger voice in decisions about what books they will rely upon in their classrooms."

(Bennett, W. J., 1988, *American Education : Making It Work,* 29).

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

The majority of the writers of the reports on American education reviewed for this study discuss issues about the quality of instructional materials used in American schools. The capability of publishers to produce textbooks of high quality and the degree to which adoption committees can evaluate textbooks effectively form by far the most serious concerns expressed by authors of these reports.

In the first instance, the writers of the reports stress the need for publishers to be made accountable for the quality of their publications. Concern is expressed in the reports that the publishers are more concerned with the quality of design and packaging rather than the content of their publications. In *American Education : Making it Work,* it has been reported that some publishers have addressed these issues, although these efforts need to be more extensive.

The intention to improve the quality of textbooks through evaluation has been addressed by textbook adoption committees. The logic of attempting to improve education in this way stems from three basic premises; first, that textbooks exert considerable influence on the curriculum; second, that publishers will produce better textbooks if adoption committees demand such improvements; and third, that the practices of textbook adoption could be improved. In spite of such intentions within the adoption process, it is evident from the reviews of the reports that the current practice of textbook adoption is fraught with problems that limit its usefulness.

Moreover, the reviews of the reports presented in this document have provided ample evidence that the use of instructional materials in American schools is forming a potent topic for educational research. Within a recent publication, Woodward et al. (1988) review the current situation in American education regarding research relating to instructional materials.

> "In view of its significant role in American elementary and secondary education, it is astonishing to discover that the textbook has not been studied by educational researchers for much longer than the past ten years. The research on teaching and learning that took place from the 1950's through most of the 1970's included classroom studies of teaching and alternative approaches to instruction in the basic subject areas and school-based studies of innovation and change in the curriculum. However, in virtually all of these the textbook was unacknowledged as a possible variable; instead, it was treated like part of the classroom furniture, a given that did not significantly influence teaching and learning one way or the other.
>
> Indeed, while recent studies indicate that schooling in the 20th century is characterised by a heavy and pervasive dependence on textbooks, research and commentary has been sporadic and faddish, being marked by peaks of brief interest followed by valleys of neglect ...
>
> ...The last few years has seen a marked change in the nature and scope of research and commentary on textbooks. Prompted primarily by the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (016), researchers and critics have recognised textbooks as important elements in any attempt to improve the quality of education and, as such, an important topic for research and criticism. In contrast to previous periods, this more recent research has been broadly based and cumulative and, significantly, a cadre of scholars has emerged that has devoted much time to researching particular problems and issues related to textbooks and the curriculum. Apparently, the textbook has become a respectable and interesting object for scholarly study and, as each new article is published,

additional interest and research is generated."

(Woodward, A., Elliott, D. L., and Nagel, K. C., 1988, *Textbooks in School and Society : An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Research*, New York : Garland Publishing, 1-3).

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